

Story 1 - Nura Clan's Resolve to Fight

Chapter 1

Continuous intense sounds of duelling can be heard inside the house.

Those are the sounds of the crossing of swords, of the breaking of paper doors and rain proof panels, plus angry shouts and the sound of scattered footsteps, the whole house was filled with murderous aura and youki. This battle is a fight between Youkai.

The Nura Clan has attacked a mansion belonging to a certain organisation, which is situated outside Edo, surrounded by trees. This is what is known as protecting one's territory.

The one leading the Nura Clan is definitely the Supreme Commander Nurarihyon, and the main members are also participating in this operation.

The ones who are under attack is a certain new organisation, these group of fellows did not greet the Nura Clan before opening a gambling den in their territory, and even stole "Fear" from the land gods under the Nura Clan's protection.

Despite repeated warnings by the Nura Clan not to infringe on their territory, not only was it ignored, their actions became more bold, deceiving and even badly injuring others.

With his tolerance reaching its limits, the Supreme Commander decided to take action tonight. Leading the Hyakki Yako, they barged into the enemies' house.

He knew that the enemies' "Fear" isn't anything to be concerned about, it was just a bunch of dumb Youkai banding together, fully intent on rebelling against the Nura Clan. It was a one sided battle in the Nura Clan's favour.

With one leg, the Supreme Commander kicked away a small Youkai, who was charging towards him with a short sword, then stepped down from the raised corridor into the yard. The final objective of this fight was not to completely eliminate the group, but to show the leader the might of the Nura Clan.

He saw the enemy leader frantically escaping to the yard. At this time, it would have been enough to give the enemy one final blow, but a wave of Youkai subordinates had rushed forward, and he had no chance to defeat the other party.

The enemy leader cannot leave the house. In order to prevent this from happening, the Supreme Commander placed some members around the perimeter of the house, he also arranged for some Youkai to keep watch from above.

A few kan away (kan is a measurement unit, 1 kan is about 1.8m), there is a stone lantern standing in the darkness, as he looked towards the stone lantern, he felt an enemy's presence behind him.

Just as the Supreme Commander turned around, about to swing his sword, Hitotsume stepped forward from the side and killed the small Youkai with a slash. The small Youkai only let out a short cry of pain, before collapsing in the yard.

"Supreme Commander, you can't just daze off here."

Hitotsume smiled with a pipe in his mouth.

"Uh, I wasn't dazing off..."

The Supreme Commander said with a wry smile.

Even if Hitotsume had not stepped forward from the side to kill the enemy, his sword would also be enough to subdue the enemy. Even though he knew that, he was still shocked at how close the enemy was able to get to him.

---I'm too arrogant... ..

He thought, I let the enemy get too close.

Afterwards, the enemy leader was found by Kappa while hiding in the pond in the yard, and was quickly captured. Kneeling in front of the Supreme Commander, the leader probably never had any intent to follow the ideals of Youkai chivalry. He disbanded his own group, and even cried while swearing that he would never step into Nura Clan territory again.

While on the way home from solving territory infringement, the Supreme Commander sat on Tenorochi, constantly thinking about the moment the enemy got close to him.

At that time, he was fully focused on finding the enemy leader, so he did not detect the enemy's presence immediately. Even though that was all that happened, like a small fish bone was stuck in his throat, the incident bothered him, and he kept thinking about it.

---This also shows that I have grown old.

This thought surfaced in his mind.

The rate of aging of Youkai is very different from humans. For some Youkai, even after 500 years, or 1000 years, their appearance remains the same; and there are even some Youkai who grow in intelligence, physical strength and ability after living this long.

The Supreme Commander Nurarihyon was supposed to be this kind of Youkai, but, this state came to an end at a certain time.

The certain time, refers to the time when his liver was eaten by the fox spirit at Osaka Castle. His body did not start to age like a human from that moment, however, at that moment, the death god had grasped his sleeve.

Three days ago, the Supreme Commander found a strand of white hair in his messy beard. After plucking it out, he would think about that white hair, and wonder if it would grow out again.

---Now that I think about it, he's already 10 years old.

It has already been 10 years since the birth of Rihan, the precious treasure. The half-youkai, just like their parents have predicted, is a very mischievous child.

Amongst his subordinates, there are some who jokingly addressed Rihan as "Second, second". Sometimes, the Supreme Commander would play along, but at that time, his wife Youhime would show a very stern expression---

"Rihan is only 10 years old."

---and chide him in this manner.

Of course, it was still too early. Rihan had not learnt the ways or resolve of Youkai chivalry, but the days when Rihan is known as the "Second" would eventually come, unlike now, when it is still treated as a joke.

Once he thinks about that moment, the corners of the Supreme Commander's mouth will naturally lift upwards. The thoughts of having to step down and retire because of his old age did not cross his mind, it was just the feeling of pure happiness.

All the parents in the world would be happy at their child's growth. With regards to this, it is the same for humans and Youkai.

Chapter 2

Rihan gave a big yawn, Karasu Tengu stopped talking then.

After Karasu Tengu cleared his throat loudly, he looked at Rihan with a sharp gaze. Karasu Tengu was reading the "Analects of Confucius", but was interrupted by Rihan's loud yawn.

"Young Master Rihan, if you do not pay attention, I will be very troubled, I will be asking you to read a similar passage later, after all."

"I know that, Karasu Tengu."

Rihan pouted.

This place is one of the rooms in the Nura Clan mansion. Currently, the 10 year old Rihan is sitting opposite Karasu Tengu at a small table.

The curriculum taught in the private schools set up by individuals in the streets is also taught here. Reading, writing, arithmetic, reading classic literature and so on, subjects like this will be taught to Rihan.

But to Rihan, the classes held every three days are very painful. Rihan is the only student, unlike the private schools which have many students, if he skipped class, he would be found out immediately, not to mention one on one teaching meant it was difficult for him to take a breather.

"Karasu Tengu, we'll just stop here for today, I already learnt a lot, yeah."

Rihan said, a hand supporting his cheek, like he always does.

"Learnt a lot? Young Master Rihan, are you making a joke? We have not even finished half of it today! I still have to ask you to take a Kanji spelling test afterwards."

"I still have to take spelling~~? Sigh, I'm going to die~~"

"Youkai do not die so easily."

All of Karasu Tengu's replies make me a little unhappy after hearing them.

If the subjects were more interesting, I would listen attentively too---Rihan often thought.

For example, things like the rules on what to do when exchanging Sakazuki, the preparations which need to be done before going out to fight, the effective ways to use "Fear" and so on. If he could be taught these things, even if he was told not to yawn, and not to use his hand to support his face, he would be willing to listen to class... ..

In reality, he had told Karasu Tengu about his wishes, but... ..

"These things would be slowly taught to you later."

That was Karasu Tengu's answer.

"Regarding the ways of Youkai, you do have many things to learn. Exchanging Sakazuki and areas you need to take note of before going out to fight, Young Master Rihan would need to know these things, but... .."

The things you need to learn now are these. Karasu Tengu lifted up the textbook.

Having to learn the same amount of knowledge as other children, this is the educational direction of his mother, Youhime. Even though there is no need to become a scholar or teacher, knowing what the children in the streets learn as they are growing up, is also very meaningful. After his mother said so, Karasu Tengu also agreed with this statement, so he was put in charge of teaching Rihan this knowledge.

But even with this reason, studying time is still very boring. Rihan seems to be unable to tolerate staying at one place for long periods of time at all. Even if Karasu Tengu said that class time is only 2 hours, but this study time made him feel as if these 2 hours are like Avici.

(T/N: Refer to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avici>)

“Okay, let us continue.”

Karasu Tengu started reading “Analects” or something again. Not understanding the meaning, scripture like phrases flowed into Rihan’s ears. Even if Karasu Tengu said that it does not matter if he did not understand the meaning of the words, and he would be able to understand it after listening and reading out the words over and over again, Rihan still felt as if he had been tricked. He wanted to yawn again, but forced himself to hold it back.

He really wants to go out and play. Just now, he heard the 2pm bell. Talking about 2pm, it is almost the time for Sounosuke to finish his training.

Once he thought about Sounosuke, Rihan could no longer suppress his desire to play.

---Isn’t it enough for today?

After thinking this, Rihan stuck out a tongue in his mind, and then he stood up naturally, throwing Karasu Tengu, who was engrossed in reading, to the back of his mind, leaving the room.

“Ah, Young Master Rihan, did you use *that move* again!”

By the time Karasu Tengu shouts were heard as he realised that Rihan was gone, Rihan had already quickly walked through the mansion’s front gate.

Nurarihyon’s ability is to enter anyone’s house as they please, so that move can also be used if one wished to slip out of the house.

Hayashida Sounosuke walked across the bridge.

Rihan, who had been throwing pebbles on the river bank, threw the pebble down and called out to him.

“Hey~~ Sounosuke.”

“Rihan.”

Sounosuke smiled. This young boy is the same age as Rihan. He is wearing a patched up training uniform, a bamboo sword on his shoulder. Sounosuke walked downwards, towards the river bank.

“I thought that your training at the dojo was ending soon.”

“You were waiting for me, sorry.”

Sounosuke settled down beside Rihan, putting the objects in his hand next to his feet.

“But, Rihan, don’t you have to study today?”

“Yeah, that’s right, but I skipped class.”

“Eh, you used that skill again?”

“That’s right, whenever I feel like skipping, I would use it accidentally.”

After Rihan showed a mischievous smile, Sounosuke smiled as well.

“Wouldn’t Karasu Tengu-san get angry?”

“I think he should be angry? But I’m already used to it.”

What you said is really too much. Sounosuke said as he smiled even more brightly.

Chapter 3

It was three months ago when Rihan and Hayashida Sounosuke met for the first time.

That day, Rihan had also left midway through Karasu Tengu’s class, going out to the streets.

Rihan felt happy wandering the streets on his own, but Karasu Tengu did not like him walking the streets on his own. Even under normal circumstances, once Rihan says “I’m going for a walk”, he would immediately appoint some clan members to be bodyguards. A lot of effort had to be spent to reject them every single time. The members of the Nura Clan are a happy group, and Rihan understands that strolling with them would make him happy too, but sometimes, Rihan wants to stroll by himself as well.

He strolled along the busy streets where shops were set up, and even visited a few shops. If he had some money on him, he would want to buy a stick of Dango from teahouse, but unfortunately, he didn’t have any.

He had already walked to the end of the densely populated shop street, and when he could see the round walls of the Samurai mansion, Rihan walked towards the side street in front of him, because there was nothing fun about looking at a Samurai mansion.

Just as he was about to step into the side street, a few young people walked out from there, and Rihan almost bumped into them.

Rihan shouted out.

“Pay attention.”

The young man with narrow eyes just said this, and left, leading his comrades. All of them were carrying bamboo swords, and they seemed to be around Rihan’s age, a bunch of arrogant guys. From their attire, they should be the children of Samurai. The young man who opened his mouth to tell Rihan to pay attention earlier said something while walking, and someone amongst his comrades will reply immediately, causing everyone to laugh, someone even saying “He’s only the child of a Ronin...”

Rihan watched that that group walked away, and with a hmph, he turned towards the alley once again.

At this moment, he saw a young man crouching in the darkness of the side street. Even though he only knew the name of the other party later, but this young man watching a patched up training uniform was Hayashida Sounosuke.

Sounosuke used the wall of the house to support himself as he stood up, with a scratch on his cheek.

Rihan ran towards Sounosuke, asking “Are you alright?”

Sounosuke looked at Rihan with an observant gaze. At this feet, there was a bamboo sword placed in a bag, the bag was patched up as well.

“Were you injured by the guys who left just now?”

Rihan asked.

From the circumstances, he could deduce that Sounosuke's injuries were not caused by him falling down.

Sounosuke nodded slightly, replying with a "Yeah".

"That group trains at the same dojo as me, and are always giving me trouble."

It was only after asking that it was known that Sounosuke was training at a nearby dojo.

The group of people who left the alley just now are the children of high ranking Bakufu officials, and are always acting high and mighty.

"Wasn't the one walking in front a guy with a fierce and evil look? He is the son of the Head Metsuke Sawamura Shigeaki, Sentarou. Those people around him are just a bunch of bootlickers."

(T/N: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metsuke>)

"Why would the guys treat you this way?"

"It's probably because I didn't go easy on them during the competition."

"Competition?"

"Yeah, recently the dojo organised a competition for children only, at that time, I went up against Sawamura Sentarou. It might be because I won that match, so Sentarou is unhappy with me."

"But, a competition is a competition."

"That kind of reasoning would not work on Sentarou. He is the son of the important person Head Metsuke Hatamoto, and I am the son of a Ronin, living in a longhouse. People with a background like mine would not be able to win the son of the Head Metsuke. (Hatamoto: Refers to people serving the Shogun during the Edo Bakufu period)

"What is this."

Rihan couldn't help but kick the ground. Even though Rihan did not know how important the Head Metsuke is, but he hates the type of people who uses his father's rank in a competition.

"Actually, all I have to do is to go easy on them, but I feel that it's not right."

Sounosuke said.

"Yeah, there was nothing wrong with what you did."

After Rihan nodded, Sounosuke gave a smile and picked up the bamboo sword which had been dropped.

"Are your injuries alright? Come to my house and I get them patched up."

After Rihan said this, Sounosuke nodded and said, "Thank you",

"But I'm alright, all these are just scratches, they don't hurt at all."

"Is that so?"

Sounosuke said "Goodbye", and started to walk off, but almost immediately, he stopped and turned, looking at Rihan.

"My name is Hayashida Sounosuke."

He gave his name.

“Sounosuke, is it? I’m Nura Rihan.”

Rihan said his name as well, and the two of them went their separate ways.

Their second meeting took place 5 days later. The situation was similar to their first meeting. Rihan, walking on the main streets, peered into the side street, and discovered Sounosuke inside.

The difference was that instead of being there after things have happened, Sounosuke was being picked on at that time.

Sounosuke had his back against the wall, with the one known as Sawamura Sentarou, son of the Head Metsuke and his followers hitting and slapping him with their hands.

“Hey, what are you doing!”

Rihan shouted at the entrance of the side street, and even though Sentarou and the rest gave a defensive stance at first due to the initial shock, once they saw that the owner of the voice was a child their age, they puffed up their chests.

“Who the heck are you? We’re busy right now, if you want to pass, then find another route.”

After Sentarou spoke up, the people surrounding him laughed “Heh heh.”

Rihan ignored them and spoke, asking, “Sentarou, are you alright?”

“Rihan... ..”

Sounosuke replied. The corner of his mouth was bruised and bleeding slightly.

“What, are you Sounosuke’s friend?”

Sentarou said with narrowed eyes.

“That’s right.”

Rihan said as he walked straight forward, standing next to Sentarou and the rest.

Then, Sentarou’s thin lips curved up with a smile.

“I see, so you’re this traitor’s friend.”

He said this. Sounosuke was shocked when he heard this. Sentarou’s followers sniggered.

“Why did you call Sounosuke a traitor?”

Rihan asked as he glared at the other party.

“What? Don’t you know? The father of this Hayashida was a person chased out from his village because he betrayed them, which is why he’s a Ronin in Edo now.”

“No! My father did no such thing!”

Sounosuke protested in an agitated tone, Sentarou, ignoring this, continued,

“His father is a traitor, so this person has a traitor’s blood flowing in him. Which means that, this person is a traitor as well.”

“Wrong! My father definitely...”

“Hey, was there anything wrong with what I said?”

Sentarou asked loudly, as if he was trying to block out Sounosuke’s protests. The people around him replied, “You’re right”, “What Sentarou-sama said is correct”, “This person is a traitor.”

“Traitors should be punished, so we’re punishing him now.”

Sentarou said, standing tall.

“Okay, now that you understand, don’t get in the way and hurry off to some other place. Or do you want to get punished together with this guy here?”

“Hmph, why should I get punished by a guy like you?”

Rihan, without backing off, glared back at Sentarou, one of his followers stepped forward immediately.

“Hey, you’ve been talking with that disrespectful tone since the start, watch it! Unless you disappear, we’re really going to give it to you.”

“Asking me to disappear? Fine then, I shall disappear, according to your wishes!”

Rihan really disappeared after saying this. This is Nurarihyon’s “Fear” --- Meikyō Shisui.

Rihan, who should have been in front of them, disappeared. Seeing this, Sentarou and the rest panicked.

Following this, Rihan appeared behind Sentarou.

“Hey.”

“What?”

The moment Sentarou turned around, his eyes widened with surprise. Rihan swung his arms powerfully.

“Despicable person!”

He greeted the other party with his fists. Sentarou grabbed his head with a cry. Seeing this, the group of followers shouted, “Sentarou, are you alright?” But in the end, they fell to Rihan’s fists.

Rihan used Meikyō Shisui to disappear and reappear, then swung his fists. At the same time, he told the group this,

“If you’re unhappy about something! Don’t surround someone with a lot of people! Fight it out one on one! Then it would be called a man’s fight!”

After hitting everyone once, Rihan stopped the activation of his “Fear”, standing with his arms crossed in front of his chest.

“What, what’s up with this guy...? An acrobat? Or, or a magician...?”

Sentarou, his face pale, backed up a few steps.

“Re, retreat! Retreat!”

He shouted as he ran away quickly, the guys around him frantically following as well.

After that group ran away, Rihan gave a “hmph” as he rubbed the area below his nose with a finger.

“A weak bunch of people.”

He said to himself.

“Rihan, thank you.”

Sounosuke gave a pained expression after saying this, it seems like the wound at his lip is hurting.

Rihan took out a handkerchief and passed it to Sounosuke, but immediately said,

“It should be better if it’s wet first, let’s go to the river.”

Then he started to walk.

After reaching the river bank, Sounosuke started to talk about his father while cleaning the wound.

“My father is not a traitor... he has been suspected before, so as punishment, he was exiled from the territory by the province leader, but he was framed.”

Even though Sounosuke’s father Hayashida Daijiro is living in Edo now, with his status as a Ronin, but when he was in his hometown of Ōshū (the current North East region), he was an outstanding Samurai working in the castle.

“... My father’s superior was very deeply involved with the betrayal, but my father did not know anything at all. However, the province leader is a very paranoid person, so many uninvolved people were punished as well...”

Hayashida Daijiro, who was exiled, brought his wife and son to Edo.

After Daijiro found a suitable longhouse to live in, he started a business of making round fans, his wife started a small eatery shop. Even though they got along with the other occupants of the longhouse quickly, Daijiro never mentioned anything about his exile. He wanted to avoid any unnecessary speculations which would make it difficult of them to live on here.

But this secret was made known to Sawamura Sentarou a few days ago for reasons unknown.

Even though Sounosuke’s father was wrongly accused, that didn’t mean anything to Sentarou. Because he has a reason to attack the arrogant Sounosuke, he’s very happy.

Until now, he has always used Ronin’s child, child with no money, reasons relating to status and economic background to pick on him, but now he has added that the father had sinned as a traitor.

Your father is a traitor, someone who doesn’t deserve to be a Samurai. When they said this, Sounosuke could not stay silent like before.

“My father is a dignified Samurai, not a person who does not deserve to be a Samurai. Compared to you people who only know how to rely on your parent’s status and put on an act, he is more like a Samurai.”

Sounosuke’s rebuttal angered Sentarou and the rest greatly, and used more violence than normal to bully him.

“It doesn’t matter how much I am bullied, but I cannot accept how they are belittling my father.”

After cleaning his wound, Sounosuke sat down at the river bank and said,

“...I really, respect my father.”

His father accepted the punishment from the province leader, and moved to Edo for the sake of his family’s safety. Even though life is hard, his father had taught him not to belittle himself. Even though his father is a Ronin, in order to reclaim his honour as a Samurai, he continued to keep in contact with his friends in various lands to find a way to reclaim his position.

“For the family and for himself, he always works hard.”

Sounosuke said that he is unable to forgive Sentarou, who slandered his father and said he is a traitor.

Sounosuke, who said everything in his heart, took about one hour to do so. The washed wound had dried, and the topic had ended.

“Sorry for making you keep me company for this long.”

Sounosuke apologized.

Rihan closed one eye and answered, “Nah, it’s fine.”

“What is Rihan’s father like?”

This time, it was Sounosuke’s turn to ask.

“My father? About that...”

Rihan looked up at the sky, his arms crossed in front of his chest.

“Hm, if I could describe it in one sentence, he is a father who is hard to grasp and understand. Even as his son, I don’t know what he’s thinking. Even though the people in the clan says that he is strong, but I have never seen my father fight. In fact, most of the time, I see him get scolded by my mother after he has drunk too much.”

“Eh, by in the clan, you mean...”

Sounosuke asked in reply.

“Oh, I’m a Youkai. I am the son of Nurarihyon, the Supreme Commander of a Youkai family. But my mother is human, so I am a half-youkai.”

Rihan said this without any hesitation, such that even he himself thought it was strange. Even though he could interact with the other party while keeping this hidden, but for some unknown reason, he did not want to do this to Sounosuke.

Half-youkai, Sounosuke said to himself, and like he just recalled something, he said,

“Then, just now, when it seemed like you disappeared and reappeared, is that actually...”

“That’s right, I did that, that is the ability of Nurarihyon.”

“So that’s it...”

Sounosuke nodded a few times, then laughed not long after.

“Ara, and I thought something was wrong with my eyes. Because you suddenly disappeared. But, after hearing that it’s a Youkai ability, I’m relieved. So you can actually do that sort of thing.”

“It’s just so-so.”

“But, your family is a Youkai family, and your father is Nurarihyon, how interesting.”

Sounosuke said happily.

“Uh, I think that you, who still thinks it’s interesting after hearing about Youkai, are a really interesting person, won’t normal people be afraid?”

Rihan gave a wry smile, then said with a serious face,

“Sounosuke, you’re not bad.”

“Not bad?”

Sounosuke looked at him as well.

“That’s right, I think you’re not bad. Even though I’m not that good at saying it, but I feel a comfortable wind coming from your “core”.”

“Wind...”

“Sounosuke, be my friend.”

Rihan asked.

Sounosuke replied immediately,

“Of course, Rihan.”

“It’s just that I’m a half-youkai, are you still alright despite that?”

Sounosuke nodded with a smile.

That day, the both of them stayed at the riverbank until the sun set, and after that, they occasionally arranged to meet at that river bank.

They played Sumo, threw stones, and if they’re tired of those, they talked about everything under the sun. Like what sword techniques were taught at the dojo, or what kind of Youkai were in the Nura mansion.

Rihan would also go to the longhouse where Sounosuke and his family lived, eating the rice balls made by Sounosuke’s mother, or use the money Youhime gave him to buy dango to share between the two of them.

Chapter 4

“My father seems to have decided to take up a position again.”

This day, after the both of them threw stones for a while, Sounosuke said this.

Even though the sun was setting, the river bank was still quite bright. The two of them sat shoulder to shoulder on the grass.

That province leader who got rid of many of his subordinates, kept making political mistakes, and the chief retainer, unable to tolerate this, took matters into his own hands. The plan was implemented afterwards, and the province leader’s cousin will take over the position. The people who have been charged with betrayed and exiled have been allowed to reclaim their previous position because of this.

(T/N: The chief retainer is a position in the Japanese Edo Bakufu government, second only to the province leader)

“Which means, you and your family are moving back to Ōshū?”

Rihan asked as he played with the grass he had plucked out, and Sounosuke nodded as he stared at the river.

“Yeah, I’m probably leaving soon. So, I won’t be able to play with Rihan anymore... sorry.”

“Idiot, what are you apologising for?”

Rihan laughed and threw the grass at Sounosuke.

“Your father can be a Samurai again, right? Isn’t that a wonderful thing?”

“True.”

“Besides, this isn’t an eternal farewell. Even though Edo and Ōshū are very far away, but we’ll be able to see each other one day. Besides, it’s not as if you’re leaving today or tomorrow, right?”

“Of course.”

“If that’s the case, don’t keep showing that depressed face right now.”

“As if I look depressed.”

Sounosuke pouted, and looked towards the river once more. Rihan also turned his gaze towards the river.

Even though the river water flowed slowly, once the both of them were silent, they felt at the sound coming from the river was very loud.

Rihan laid back on the ground heavily.

“Ōshū huh, I would want to see it one day.”

Once he heard Rihan’s words, Sounosuke’s face suddenly lit up.

“Then come, my parents would be very happy.”

“I heard from my father, Ōshū has many types of Youkai as well.”

“Nurarihyon-sama said that?”

“That’s right, I remember it was a Youkai group by the name of Ōshū Tono. I heard that my father was helped by them before.”

“Tono, is it? That’s a place surrounded by mountains. I also heard that there are many strange stories and Youkai legends in that area.”

Sounosuke then talked about some things about his hometown. Even though a thick layer of snow falls in the winter, but once spring comes, beautiful Sakura would bloom at the riverbank near his house. In addition, a strong tasting soya sauce stew dish has been passed down in that area for many generations, Sounosuke’s mother is very skilled at cooking this dish.

“Son of a traitor and the *magic trick* guy, your relationship is so good today as well.”

Just then, a voice was heard from above, and their conversation was interrupted.

As expected, the ones on the bridge were Sawamura Sentarou and his group of followers. Sentarou and the rest smirked evilly as they walked down towards the riverbank.

Sounosuke did not reply them at all. Even though he wasn’t speaking out for Sounosuke, Rihan opened his mouth anyway,

“What? That’s rare of you today, don’t you normally hide some place faraway while shouting some lame things?”

The fact that Sentarou and the rest came to the riverbank surprised Rihan.

Probably because they are afraid of Rihan, who can use *strange tricks*, and fights well, so recently, when Rihan is around, they would not confront Sounosuke directly with violence, and would only shout insults from faraway at most. But today, even though they saw Rihan, they still approached.

“Today is different from normal.”

Sentarou declared happily, then raised his hand as he looked towards the bridge. Two adults, who seemed like they have been waiting on the bridge, walked down to the riverbank at this signal.

These two people are Samurai, fit and large in build, it looks like Sentarou had called some adults to help with this children’s quarrel. The two adults smirked as they looked at Rihan from their position besides Sentarou.

“You talking about these guys? We would be able to settle this brat easily.”

“I would make them cry and apologise to you soon, please wait a while.”

They even said things like this.

“I’m leaving it up to you then, if you do a good job, I will tell my father your names.”

After Sentarou said this with an evil smile, the two adults responded with mean grins.

So this was it, he understands the situation now. The both of them did not accept the request from the Head Metsuke’s son reluctantly, but are eager to carry this out. Even though it wasn’t confirmed whether they would get money or a position as a reward, they were a group of lame adults.

“Hey, brats, let me teach you the rules of this world.”

One person standing in front of Rihan said.

“Hmph, I have nothing to learn from uncles who interfere in the quarrels of children.”

After Rihan said this, the expression of the other party changed immediately and stretched out his hands as he angrily shouted, “Damn brat,” aiming to press Rihan down. But his hands never touched Rihan. After using his usual “Trick” and disappearing, he reappeared, jumping up and swinging his fists.

The two Samurai seemed to feel that they shouldn’t use their swords on children, so they are only aiming to restrict their movements and give them a few slaps, but the hands they reached out towards Rihan never touched anything.

“What are you doing, how useless! Didn’t I say that guy moves very fast! Look, over there!”

Even if Sentarou continued to say this in frustration, the result was still the same.

In the end, the two Samurai left the riverbank, faces red and out of breath, Sentarou scolded them angrily, “Unless fellows!”, and the whole group left the riverbank.

“Rihan, thank you.”

When Sounosuke is with Rihan, he would not get hurt. Rihan said to Sounosuke, who had lowered his head in thanks,

“It’s nothing.”

He blinked as he waved his hand.

Chapter 5

“Young Master Rihan skipped class today as well.”

Just as the Supreme Commander was smoking his pipe in the room, Karasu Tengu appeared in front of him, saying this with a very unhappy face.

The Supreme Commander exhaled the smoke leisurely.

“Oh, is that so?”

He only replied with one sentence. Seeing this reaction, Karasu Tengu said in a sighing and forlorn voice,

“This is already the fifth, no, the sixth time Young Master Rihan has skipped class. May I request that Supreme Commander talk to Young Master Rihan? Ask him to be more serious about his classes.”

“But, skipping class means that he dislikes it, which is why he skips it, if it’s like that, then don’t ask him to take any more classes, that would solve it.”

After saying this, the Supreme Commander exhaled another puff of smoke.

“But, the basic level of knowledge should be known, at the very least...”

“It’s fine as long as he can write his own name, there’s no need to be so hardworking.”

“You’re saying this again. Teaching Young Master Rihan this knowledge is still the will of Mistress Youhime.”

“Because that person is too serious about the education of children.”

After the Supreme Commander said this, he couldn’t help but sense the aura on the other side of the paper door.

Right now, Youhime should be in the kitchen preparing dinner, so there was no need to worry about the sentence he casually said just now being heard by her. But if she heard it, she would definitely show a black face, then rebut by saying that it’s not being too serious, but the normal standard of doing things or something to that effect.

It’s fine just to live freely --- the Supreme Commander only thought about that. How can the child of Nurarihyon not live his days freely? Even if he does smile while thinking about the scene of Rihan inheriting the title of the Second, but even with that, he wouldn’t want to command Rihan to do this and that so that he would become a spectacular Second Head.

“Hmm~~but, what should I do so that Young Master Rihan studies...”

Karasu Tengu thought, crossing his arms.

“Don’t think so much, you’ll drop feathers.”

The Supreme Commander said with a smile.

Just as the tobacco in the pipe finished burning, the topic shifted from Rihan to other matters.

“That’s right, Supreme Commander, regarding the fire which occurred in Fukugawa a few days ago... ...”

Karasu Tengu, sitting up straight, changed the topic, his expression changing from that of a temporary teacher to the advisor of the Nura Clan, and his voice took on a deep tone as well.

“That fire was deliberately started by someone... ...”

Karasu Tengu said.

Two days ago, a teahouse in Fukugawa caught fire, the time was around 6pm, the teahouse, known as “Akakiya” and the neighbouring houses were swallowed by the fire, including the cooks, waitresses and customers, in total, ten people have died.

"We have also gotten the investigation results from the detectives in the streets, and it was said that the fire did not originate from the cooking area, but from the area behind the shop, where lighting of fires is unnecessary under normal circumstances, I believe this is arson."

"Arson? There are people who would do lame things like that."

The Supreme Commander knocked the ashes out from his pipe.

"But, why do we have to investigate this fire? Even though the people who died are to be pitied, this isn't something which we should be concerned about."

"Uh, that's because our Nura Clan has also suffered slight losses from this."

"Us?"

"That's right. There was actually a small shrine near the teahouse, and that shrine was destroyed when the fire spread, and the land god living in that shrine is under the protection of the Nura Clan. Thankfully the land god is unharmed, but because that shrine was burnt down, that land god has nowhere to stay now."

Karasu Tengu explained that even though that shrine will be reconstructed starting from tomorrow according to the Nura Clan's plans, but this incident will not end with the reconstruction of the shrine.

"If the fire this time was really caused by arson, it means that the criminal has brought about losses to the Nura Clan, a land god with relations to the Nura Clan has lost its home after all. From our point of view, we cannot leave this alone."

As long as the detectives successfully capture the criminal, then the punishment will be dealt by the officials, but if the capture fails... ..

"---at that time, it would be up to us to rat out the criminal. Therefore, I'm thinking that we should use our own methods to investigate."

"I see, I understand."

The Supreme Commander nodded.

"Okay, I'll leave the investigation methods to you. Just that, for the new shrine we are building for the land god, remember to reinforce it more."

He gave a simple instruction.

At this time, a voice saying, "I'm back" is heard, accompanied by the sounds of footsteps approaching from the corridor. The problem child whom had been discussed earlier had returned.

"Dad, I'm back!"

When Rihan pulled open the paper door, he spoke in a *mature* tone, but when he saw Karasu Tengu sitting opposite his father, he gave a "Che" and froze in place, with "What's up, you're here too?" written all over his face.

Karasu Tengu intentionally cleared his throat and said,

"Young Master Rihan, welcome back. You are back early."

He did not forget to add some sarcasm into his tone.

"Uh, yeah, I'm back."

“Then, let’s continue the lesson.”

“Eh, spare me~~I’m sorry for today, I’ll work hard next time.”

Rihan was very reluctant, and it showed on his face.

“You say next time, next time every single time, the progress of the lessons is already very behind schedule.” Karasu Tengu said.

“But, it’s almost dinner, you know.”

Rihan said as he glanced towards the kitchen. But Karasu Tengu did not treat the sentence as anything significant, and gave him a calm look.

“There’s still an hour before dinner.”

“Then again, Karasu Tengu.”

Rihan said, his face showing displeasure.

“I still think that textbook is no good at all. It’s really boring, even if you talk about Analects or something, I don’t understand what it is anyway.”

“It doesn’t matter even if you do not understand, as long as you use your ears to listen, and read it out---”

“Read it out, then you would understand, isn’t it? I’m already tired of hearing this.”

---Hmm... ..

When the Supreme Commander heard the both of them talk from the side, he felt that his son was quite pitiful.

Even though what is taught here is the same as what is taught in the private schools in the streets, but actually having Rihan learn the “Analects of Confucius”. The Supreme Commander thought to himself, that is really boring, I don’t even understand it myself. He mumbled in his heart.

“Hey, Karasu Tengu, I have a suggestion. I won’t ask for everything, but since class only takes place every three days, why don’t you use one of the days to teach him “Youkai Chivalry”? For example, lesson one... how to give orders. What do you think?”

(T/N: The term used was 放话, which can mean threaten or give orders, but I don’t think Nurarihyon wants to have his son learn how to threaten others yet XD)

The Supreme Commander couldn’t resist saying this in a half joking manner.

“Since he’s a half Youkai, then what he learns should be half and half too, isn’t that good?”

Just as he is about to continue talking,

“That’s right! I asked him to do such a thing earlier too.”

Because this opinion matched his desires, Rihan raised his voice, and a strict voice was heard from somewhere else as a result.

“Ayakashi-sama, what are you saying?”

Following that, the owner of the voice appeared, pushing open the paper door.

It was Youhime. The duties in the kitchen were probably done, so she was not wearing an apron. Youhime was nearly 30 years old, and the childlike aura she had when she first married had disappeared, transforming into a mature beautiful lady. Her beauty had not changed at all, but right now, there was a slight crease between her eyebrows.

Out of everything she could have heard, she had to hear the things she wasn't supposed to hear. The Supreme Commander scratched his head, Youhime said to him,

"Didn't I tell you many times? Rihan is only ten years old, we can teach him the matters of chivalry once he grows up and it would be fine."

"Yeah, I know that, but it won't hurt him even if we teach him earlier, right? Especially since this child can already use Meikyō Shisui."

"It's good that he can use it, but I hope he wouldn't use it when I'm teaching."

Karasu Tengu said, showing an unhappy expression.

"But then, the fact that you let Rihan get away a few times shows that his Meikyō Shisui is really amazing, right?"

"Those are two different issues."

After Karasu Tengu said this, Youhime continued,

"I also know that Rihan matures faster on his Youkai side, and precisely because of that, I do not want him to neglect his human side."

"Uh, I never said to neglect it, Youhime. There's just no need to restrict him to a desk."

"Supreme Commander, it's only one class every three days, how can he be unable to tolerate just that?"

"Didn't I say this before? Rihan only ran away because he cannot tolerate it, if that's the case, why not teach him something he is more interested in..."

As the Supreme Commander spoke, he noticed something.

"Hey, compared to that, where did Rihan go?"

"Where? Isn't he just here? Ehh?"

"Ara, this child is really too much."

Rihan had disappeared from the room.

At this moment, Setsura's voice was heard from the kitchen.

"Hey, Rihan! You can't just take the food!"

Following Setsura's voice, the voice of Rihan going "Heh heh" was heard. It looks like Rihan ignored the adults discussing his education direction, and escaped successfully with Meikyō Shisui.

"Hahaha, I'm expecting great things from this child!"

The Supreme Commander laughed loudly.

"Is this the time to say something like that!"

His laughter overlapped with the shouts from Karasu Tengu and Youhime.

Chapter 6

Deep in the house, a secret meeting is being held in one of the rooms.

This place is Bakufu Head Metsuke ● Sawamura Shigeaki's mansion, the other party in the secret meeting is Sawamura's confidant ● Kurogawa Nobumitsu.

The single paper lantern in the room cast shadows on the faces the two people in the room. Because this is a secret meeting, both of them are talking softly, and are also sitting very close to one another.

"Kurogawa, it seems that the arson has been exposed."

Sawamura spoke, and Kurogawa replied respectfully, "That's right."

"My deepest apologies..."

"It doesn't matter, the middle aged woman who has heard my plans and knows that I am going to assassinate the person in the way of my advancement has burnt to death according to plans, so there will be no interferences for now...the problem is that it was found out that it was arson, so the detectives are conducting a large scale investigation now."

The two of them are talking about the fire which happened at Fukugawa, Akakiya two days ago. That arson occurred as ordered by these two people, no, strictly speaking, Sawamura Shigeaki.

Sawamura ordered Kurogawa, and Kurogawa hired another person to set fire to Akakiya. Not only were a few chefs and waitresses burnt to death, even quite a few number of customers perished. Amongst the customers who died, there was one who died in a room further away, an ex-Oiran from Yoshiwara, also Sawamura's concubine. Sawamura set fire to Akakiya to kill this concubine.

Even though the guards have concluded that this fire was intentionally caused by someone, many other people have died besides that woman, so they have not found out that the fire was planned to kill one woman. However, because there were so many deaths, they have no choice but to find the culprit, that is the truth.

I cannot allow this to get in the way of my rise to power, I cannot stop at being a Head Metsuke, but climb to higher positions. He wants this assassination plan to succeed, and continue climbing up the ladder to glory. He wants his son, Sentarou to see, as long as Sentarou harbours the same thoughts as him in the future, the Sawamura family will flourish forever.

"We need to find someone to be the criminal, is there anyone we can use?"

"A scapegoat, huh..."

"We can't find just anyone, not a Samurai or a wealthy merchant, if it's a poor Ronin, it's fine."

After Sawamura said this, Kurogawa crossed his arms and tilted his head as he started to think. After letting out a "Hmm..." sound, he did not raise his head.

Even if it is Sawamura, he could not think of a suitable candidate on such a short notice. But right now, they need someone who can take the fall for the arson case.

"Pardon me."

Sentarou's voice was heard then, and the paper door opened.

"Father, I'm back."

Sentarou bowed.

His father responded with a “Yea”, Sentarou became concerned about the serious look on his father’s face.

“May I know what happened? Both of you look troubled...”

Even though he asked, Sawamura could not say that he is currently finding a Ronin who could take the fall for the arson.

---No... ..

It won’t hurt even if I say it. This thought came to Sawamura.

The concubine that knows of the assassination has already died in the fire, I need someone to be the arsonist---

For a ten year old, this kind of secret might be too big of a burden, but one day, Sentarou would also be an official in the Bakufu government, and facing this kind of world. To survive in this world, sacrifices are needed---it won’t hurt to teach him this principle now.

Sawamura told Sentarou about the chain of events.

“---so we would need a scapegoat to hand over to the guards.”

Even after hearing what his father said, Sentarou did not cower away from the heavy truth, and even said with a sly smile,

“Father, if that’s the case, I have a suitable candidate...”

Chapter 7

There are small plazas which make up the area around the well at the longhouse, Rihan and Sounosuke were there, using wooden rods to imitate the practicing of sword techniques.

Just as the both of them were about to drink water as their play came to an end, a tense aura could be felt ten houses away, at the entrance of the longhouse.

A man, who looked like an official from the Yamen, walked in front, leading a team, and the detectives, wearing the attire meant for capturing criminals walked over with grim looks on their faces. Sawamura Sentarou was also near the front of the group, and because there was a child in the middle of all the adults, he stood out a lot. He walked proudly, with the usual sly smile on his face.

Rihan and Sounosuke exchanged glances.

“What is that guy doing...”

Sounosuke tilted his head and expressed his confusion in a hushed voice.

The women in the longhouse, in the middle of placating their toddlers or drying clothes, paused in their movements, faces full of unease as the team passed by, and the detective seem to be walking towards one of the houses without hesitation.

Just then, Sentarou noticed Rihan and Sounosuke by the well. He opened his mouth, giving a quiet smile.

The next moment, Sounosuke started to run, with Rihan following behind.

At the place where the simple house lay, the detectives stopped in front of Sounosuke’s house.

“Father, Mother!”

Sounosuke wanted to run back home, but he was immediately stopped by a detective who grabbed his shoulder and was unable to go any further.

“What are all of you doing!”

Just as Rihan shouted, some commotion was heard from Sounosuke’s home, the sounds of someone’s shouts, falling objects and broken ceramic were heard from within. At this time, Sounosuke’s father ● Daijiro ran out from the house, with the apron he wore while working hanging around his waist. A few detectives suppressed Daijiro, who collapsed on the ground.

“What are all of you doing!”

Sounosuke’s mother also ran out, shouting, but her arm was immediately grabbed by one of the detectives.

“Mother!”

Sounosuke shouted.

Rihan glared at Sentarou, smiling slyly at the detectives’ side.

“What do you guys want!”

“Hmph, you should be able to tell with one glance, Hayashida Daijiro is going to be sentenced by the officials.”

Sentarou gave a cold smile as he shifted his gaze to Sounosuke.

“Hey, Sounosuke, you should be feel grateful. I specially came to see your father, who you respect so much, get arrested as a criminal.”

“Tell me, what did my father do!”

Sounosuke said, his shoulder still held by the detective.

“Arson.”

Sentarou replied. The man who led the detectives continued,

“Hayashida Daijiro, you are suspected of committing the arson of the Akakiya teahouse at Fukugawa. Stop any unnecessary resistance and submit.”

“You say that I committed arson? Has there been some mistake?”

Even though he is currently making handcrafts, the way Daijiro speaks still carries some shadow of his previous Samurai status.

“That’s right, my father would never do such a thing!”

Sounosuke shouted. But the man from the Yamen ignored him.

“Four days ago, on the night when the fire occurred, there are people who said that they saw you nearby.”

“Who said something like that...I have never gone to Fukugawa...”

“That’s right, Mr Official, my husband is not the type to roam about at night.”

Even though Sounosuke’s mother spoke up, the man from the Yamen remained cold.

“If you wish to explain, then wait until the trial to do so. Take him away.”

The subordinate detectives took action simultaneously at the instructions, preparing to use the rope to tie up Daijiro.

“Father!”

Sounosuke tried to rush forward again.

“Get out of the way!”

The detective held him on the ground. Even then, Sounosuke continued to shout, “Father, father!” Daijiro also shouted, “Sounosuke!”

“Hey, let go of Sounosuke’s father!”

After saying this, Rihan ran towards the detectives like a bullet. Even though he was of small build, the impact he made on collision was powerful, and many detectives were sent flying.

“What’s up with this brat!”

The detectives reached over, and Rihan used Meikyō Shisui to disappear and reappear. The detectives started to make a ruckus. The next moment, Sentarou shouted,

“Hey, this guy can use strange tricks! Someone get a net!”

One of the detectives heard and acted quickly.

Just after seeing a black shadow block the sky, Rihan was immediately covered in a large net.

“---!”

Rihan tried to get out of the net quickly, but did not succeed. The net tightened from one area, and Rihan’s body was caught in it.

“Wha, what are all of you doing!”

“Haha, once you’re caught, there’s nothing to be afraid of!”

Sentarou laughed as he approached.

“You! Let me out!”

Rihan shouted from inside the net, but Sentarou’s answers were accompanied with kicks.

“Shut up, causing so much trouble for me!”

It didn’t end after one kick, after that he kicked a second time, third time, and fourth time.

“Rihan!”

Sounosuke, pressed to the ground, started to shout.

After kicking more than ten times, Sentarou finally stopped.

“Let...his father...go...”

Rihan said, his face dirtied by dirt and blood.

“Don’t worry, if he’s innocent, he will be released immediately. If he’s innocent, that is.”

Sentarou said, panting slightly after kicking someone, a sly smirk showing on his face once more.

Sentarou walked away from Rihan, and said to the man from the Yamen, "Let's go." Hayashida Daijiro, tied up with rope, was pulled along as well.

"Father!"

"Mr Official, please wait!"

The voice of Sounosuke's mother could be heard from everywhere in the longhouse, and Rihan kept shouting from inside the net, "Hey, you bastards!"

However, the detectives did not look back, they left Daijiro's family and Rihan, who is caught in the net, behind, disappearing through the other end of the long house.

Chapter 8

It was evening, and when the Supreme Commander was about to return to his room after a trip to the washroom, he heard Setsura's and Rihan's voices coming from the kitchen. Their conversation did not sound normal, so he took a look inside and saw Setsura trying to placate Rihan.

"Okay, Rihan, calm down a little!"

Setsura grabbed Rihan's hand.

"Setsura, let go of me, I must go!"

Rihan protested.

Rihan did not use the main door, it seems, but came from behind the kitchen, because the door on the other side of the kitchen was open. But compared to that, he was more concerned with what Rihan was holding. Rihan was grabbing a wooden stick tightly, probably taken from the kitchen. Upon closer inspection, there were rice grains at the corner of his mouth, and with even more inspection, he realised that there were countless scratches on his face and hands. With this, it looks like he had come back from outside, ate rice balls to fill his stomach, took a wooden stick after that to go out and fight, but was stopped by Yuki-onna.

"Where are you going with that stick?"

The Supreme Commander asked.

"Ah, Nurarihyon!"

"Dad!"

Setsura and Rihan turned their heads at the same time, but Setsura was the one who spoke first,

"Hey, scold him a bit, this child says that he wants to go "Supress" and wouldn't listen to me."

"Supress?"

The Supreme Commander raised an eyebrow, and Rihan immediately said with a sharp gaze,

"Dad, don't stop me, I'm going no matter what."

"Eh, I never said that I am going to stop you."

"Stop him quickly!"

The Supreme Commander filed Setsura's words away, and continued to speak,

"Who is it you want to suppress? Where do you plan to suppress?"

"Why should the place matter?"

"How can it not matter?"

The Supreme Commander's face tensed up slightly.

"Is the suppression you're planning reasonable? If it's not reasonable, then it's not a suppression, and it's only counted as causing trouble. Rihan, gangsters causing trouble and a Yakuza suppression is different."

"....."

Rihan pouted, but explained honestly after a while,

"...I want to save my friend's father."

"Your friend's?"

"That's right, I have a friend called Sounosuke, his father was just arrested by the people from the Yamen, the other party said that he is the arsonist for the Fukugawa fire."

"Fukugawa fire? Are you talking about Akakiya?"

"Dad, so you knew about that!"

Rihan looked at the Supreme Commander's face, he nodded and replied vaguely, "Hmm, yeah."

"But Sounosuke's father did nothing like that, his father was framed!"

Rihan said loudly.

When the fire happened, Sounosuke's family were apparently all at home.

"Sounosuke said this before, so it can't be done by his father. But those people from the Yamen wouldn't listen. Those people must be ordered by Sentarou, capturing his father to bully Sounosuke. That must be it."

"Who is this Sentarou you mentioned?"

"An irritating type of person. He is the son of a big shot Bakufu official, and has something against Sounosuke."

What Rihan meant is because of the orders of that big shot's son, the Yamen arrested his friend's father, so he wants to rescue him.

"I see. It does sound reasonable."

The Supreme Commander stroked his chin.

"Hey, Nurarihyon!"

Setsura shouted loudly, unable to tolerate it any further.

"Do you plan to let a ten year old go out to fight with an enemy?"

"He wants to help his friend with all his might, right? Isn't that good?"

"Seriously..."

Setsura let out a sigh.

"You, are really a relaxed father, allowing one child to infiltrate the Yamen, what can he do?"

"Hey, Setsura, don't look down on me."

Rihan looked angry.

"I'm not going to infiltrate a place with Youkai, just rescuing my friend's father from a group of dim witted uncles, even I can do something like that."

Setsura sighed again.

"But.....sigh, what's up with this~~father and son are so relaxed, is the Nurarihyon bloodline like this?"

"Maybe."

The Supreme Commander laughed, and Setsura glared at him. At this moment, Karasu Tengu flew over, flapping his wings.

"I also feel that we should not allow Young Master to go to the Yamen."

Karasu Tengu said this once he entered the kitchen.

"What is it, Karasu Tengu, you think that I'm weak as well?"

Rihan looked gloomy, Karasu Tengu continued.

"No, I have no intention of belittling Young Master Rihan. What I wish to express is that the true enemy to defeat is someone else."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

Karasu Tengu answered the Supreme Commander's question, floating in the air.

"...Regarding the arson case at Fukugawa, from our investigations, we have reached a conclusion which is close to the truth. Young Master Rihan is right, Hayashida Sounosuke's father ● Daijiro is not the culprit in the arson, Daijiro-san was framed. It's only that there is something else going on behind the shadows..."

After Karasu Tengu finished the overview, he reported the results of the investigation conducted by the clan members and the crows in Edo.

In short, the mastermind in this incident is the Bakufu Head Metsuke ● Sawamura Shigeaki. Sawamura's assassination plan was discovered by his concubine, so he hired people to set fire to Akakiya to silence the concubine. His plan was exposed, and it was found to be arson, and so to shift the Yamen's attention, Sawamura set up Hayashida Daijiro as the scapegoat, arresting him...

"---As for Hayashida Daijiro being set up as the culprit, it is highly possible that Sentarou suggested it. Also, for him to appear at the place where Daijiro-san was arrested, he probably wanted to see Sounosuke's devastated look after his father was arrested."

"I see. If that is the truth, then that child is incorrigible. But, why has everything become so complicated? Actually involving the Head Metsuke wanting to assassinate the Rōjyū."

(T/N: Rōjyū: Elder, one of the highest ranking government posts)

The Supreme Commander crossed his arms.

"Hmph, these complicated things have nothing to do with me."

Rihan said.

“The matter of assassinating the Rōjyū doesn’t matter at all, I just want to rescue Sounosuke’s father.”

“But, Young Master Rihan, even if you do rescue Daijiro-san from the Yamen jail, it does not solve the root of the problem. If we want to take down Sawamura’s evil plans, then we have to take down Sawamura himself.”

“Then tonight, we go to the Sawamura mansion to fight!”

Rihan waved around the wooden stick in his hand in his agitation, Karasu Tengu quickly elaborated.

“Uh, Young Master Rihan, just leave the matter of taking down Sawamura to us...”

“Karasu Tengu is really weird, you told him the whole truth, but object to me fighting in the end.”

“That, that’s a given! I wanted Young Master Rihan to understand the magnitude and importance of the whole situation, and give up on the fight, so I told you the truth.”

“How can I give up after hearing about this, I want to go.”

“Hey, Rihan.”

Setsura interrupted then.

“After entering the Head Metsuke’s mansion, what do you plan to do?”

“Isn’t it obvious? I want to give Sentarou’s father a good beating, and ask him to apologise to Sounosuke’s father to atone. After that, hmm, I want him to write a letter as proof that he would no longer do anything to Sounosuke’s family.”

“How would you be able to do such a thing, besides, if Youhime hears about such a thing...”

Setsura was still speaking when soft sounds the floors creaking were heard from near the kitchen door.

Setsura and Karasu Tengu froze with fright, while the Supreme Commander turned towards that direction without any change in his expression.

Youhime arrived at the door. Her arms were crossed, and she stared at Rihan. Her normally cute lips were pursed, and her heart seemed to be hiding a firm will.

“Uh, about this, it’s not what you think, Youhime, don’t misunderstand...”

Setsura said as she gave a stiff smile.

“That, that’s right, Madam Youhime, Young Master Rihan is just agitated...”

Karasu Tengu also hastily explained.

Even though it has been seen less often, but Setsura and Karasu Tengu are very afraid of Youhime’s volcano eruption.

Youhime opened her mouth, and sucked in a breath. The two crouched in fear.

“Rihan, go fight.”

Youhime said this. Her voice full of strength.

“Eh....?”

Karasu Tengu and Setsura blinked, stunned, and only the Supreme Commander gave a small smile.

Rihan asked in surprise,

“Uh, is mum not going to stop me.....?”

Following that, Youhime smiled and shook her head.

“Isn’t this for your friend? You want to do what is right, why would I stop you as a mother. Rihan, stand tall and fight!”

After hearing his mother’s words, Rihan couldn’t speak for a while, but not long after....

“I understand, mum!”

He nodded vigorously.

“Eh, but, you...”

Setsura spoke cautiously,

“That’s the Head Metsuke’s mansion, you know? There will definitely be many subordinates in that house, and there might be skilled people amongst them, normally, you would stop this angrily.....”

“Setsura-san, it’s okay.”

Youhime said, her smile growing wider,

“Because, for Rihan’s *first* fight, Ayakashi-sama will be at his side.”

“What, he’s going too?”

“That’s right, because Rihan’s enemy this time is also the enemy of the Nura Clan. Isn’t that right, Ayakashi-sama?”

His wife looked over, and the Supreme Commander nodded slowly.

“That’s right, after all the arson this time caused trouble for our land gods, so this person known as Sawamura Shigeaki is considered an enemy of the Nura Clan.”

The Supreme Commander turned to Rihan after saying this.

“That’s the situation. Therefore, Rihan, the fight this time will be led by me, you can watch me and my Hyakki fight from the side.”

“Eh, how can you ask me to watch, I also.....”

The Supreme Commander interrupted Rihan, who was about to rebut.

“I understand, Rihan. I’m not treating you as a useless child. To tell the truth, this is my special lesson.”

“Special... lesson...?”

“Yeah, that’s right. Today, forget about reading, writing and arithmetic, the next lesson will be taught by the Supreme Commander, Nurarihyon-sama “Youkai Chivalry ● Supression edition”.”

“Dad...”

A smile started to spread across Rihan’s face.

“The target of attack is the mansion belonging to the Bakufu Head Metsuke ● Sawamura Shigeaki! Listen well, Rihan, my teaching methods may be rough, but if you skip classes like what you usually do, I won’t forgive you!”

After this, a small wave of commotion spread in the mansion, because the preparations for the fight have started.

The subordinates responsible for passing on orders ran around in order to gather group leaders and members who could mobilise, and there were members who ran around to prepare the tools. The mansion was filled with noise and hot bloodedness, but it wasn't messy at all.

Thirty minutes later, the Hyakki gathered in the yard, and the Supreme Commander, carrying Nenekirimaru on his shoulder, stood at the front, with Rihan at his side.

The sun had set, and it is now night time, torches were lit around the yard.

"Listen up, everyone."

The Supreme Commander spoke,

"This time, the other party in this fight is not a Youkai clan, it's the mansion of Bakufu Head Metsuke ● Sawamura. You should have heard the rough details from Karasu Tengu, this person known as Sawamura is the culprit behind the burning of the shrine near Akakiya. Not only that, he wants to push the arson crime onto the father of Rihan's friend, a person who is rotten to the core. He destroyed the shrine of a land god, killed a good number of humans, and plans to push the crime onto an innocent person in the end, this person is the devil amongst devils. Therefore, we are going to sentence him tonight."

"Hmph, drawing the ire of both humans and Youkai, he really is a rotten person, we must teach that sort of person a lesson."

In the yard, one of the leaders ● Hitotsume said. A sharp gaze could be seen from his large eye. "Right, right", "A disloyal person", the Youkai started to make noise at this.

"Very good, then let's fire up our spirits before we go."

After the Supreme Commander said this, the small Youkai moved in unison.

Firing up one spirits means using the large barrel of wine placed in the yard. Small Youkai not participating in the fight pour wine in to the wooden wine cups, efficiently handing them to the Hyakki.

After everyone received one wine cup, Karasu Tengu, also holding a wine cup, said,

"Listen, all Youkai, perhaps you already know, Young Master Rihan will be accompanying us during this fight. This is Young Master Rihan's first fight, the Hyakki of the Nura Clan should show your best sides, and fight a beautiful battle to decorate Young Master's first mobilisation, am I right, everyone!"

After Karasu Tengu said this, he raised his wine cup, and the Hyakki in the yard shouted together, "That's right!"

Everyone drank their wine in one gulp.

"Young Master Koi, you should engrave your father's fighting stance into your heart."

Hihi said to Rihan in a warm tone.

"I, I understand."

Rihan spoke firmly, his voice still contained some nervousness. This can't be helped, it is his first fight after all. Even though he had watched the Supreme Commander's parade of Youkai leaving the mansion in a grand manner, but tonight is his first participation.

Rihan's expression was stiff due to nervousness, the Supreme Commander patted his son's head, then turned back to the gathered Youkai.

"Let's go."

After shouting this, the Supreme Commander led the way, and the Hyakki followed behind.

"Ayakashi-sama, please be careful."

Youhime stood at the door.

She said as she struck a flint stone.

The Supreme Commander nodded as he looked at his wife's eyes, and said,

"I'm going."

Youhime nodded in response.

The expression of unease on his wife only served to give him confidence.

Chapter 9

There were three people in one of the mansion's rooms, Sawamura Shigeaki, Sentarou and Kurogawa Nobumitsu.

Regarding Hayashida Daijiro being arrested by the Yamen, the son has already reported to the father, and the father and confidant are relieved that they were able to find a scapegoat according to plan.

"Well, I was frustrated and wondering what to do for a while, but it looks like the danger has passed."

Sawamura Shigeaki said. Kurogawa nodded.

"You're right, the Yamen would be vigorously interrogating Hayashida Daijiro, so they would not turn their investigation towards us, after a while, this incident will fade..."

"Hmph, but it's pitiful, experiencing such a thing just because he's a Ronin....."

"Father, the strong devouring the weak is the law of nature, there's no need to feel pained over this."

Sentarou laughed after saying this, the father and confidant gave low pitch laughs seeing this.

"Heh heh, I have underestimated, it looks like my son has more courage than me."

"That's right, there's much to expect in the future."

Just as laughter filled the room, the retainer's voice could be heard from the other side of the paper door.

"Report!"

"What is it."

At Sawamura's reply, the retainer replied hastily,

"We, we have been subjugated!"

"Subjugated?"

"Uh, that's not it, I'm not sure if I should say suppressed..."

“What’s going on?”

“That is, uh...”

“That’s enough, say things clearly!”

Even with Sawamura’s reprimand, the retainer only replied after two seconds.

“That is, uh, the Yakuza came to suppress...”

“Yakuza?”

“And it’s a Youkai Yakuza!”

Sawamura did not understand at all, so he gave confused looks to his son and Kurogawa.

At this moment, faint cries could be heard from the main gate.

Chapter 10

Nurarihyon’s fear is to enter homes without anyone noticing, but, this would not apply during suppression.

Rather than say that they passed through the gate, it is more like the Supreme Commander used the power of the Hyakki to break it down and attack, arriving at the entrance of the house. Obviously he would not open the door gently, but kicked the door open, entering roughly. The retainers of Sawamura’s house heard the commotion and rushed out, he told these people,

“The Nura Clan has come to suppress the place! You guys better be prepared!”

After the Supreme Commander announced this with a powerful aura, the Hyakki surrounded the house in an instant.

“Young Master Rihan, do not leave my side!”

Rihan listened to Karasu Tengu’s instructions. Now isn’t the time to say “I want to fight too.” Angry roars and moans could be heard nearby, the clashing of swords and sparks started to fly.

The Sawamura retainers, who attacked one after another were really strong Samurai who have trained well, but the fear from the Hyakki were spreading throughout the Head Metsuke’s mansion, and they did not see the swords as a threat at all.

This is the first time Rihan could see the power of the Hyakki close up, and the scene in front of him exceeded what he had imagined.

Hitotsume’s sword shone brightly as it was swung boldly, Hihi moved in between the masses of blades, his sharp nails leaving a trail of light. The retainers, no longer able to fight, gathered in a pile like broken dolls behind them.

Besides the leaders, the members from the various clans are also forces of be reckoned with. Some have large bodies, others have long arms and legs, not allowing the enemy to come close; some fight with items, some transform into beasts to fight, some attack in groups, they activated their own fear, not allowing the enemy to come close; the many types of fear became a thick wall, destroying Sawamura’s retainers.

Karasu Tengu also swung the blade installed inside his Buddhist staff efficiently while protecting Rihan at the same time. Even though he is smaller in size, his style of attack is swift and aggressive, and with just one, two swings of his sword, he could make his opponent drop his weapon and back up.

But the most amazing of them all has to be his father ● the Supreme Commander.

He used Meikyō Shisui to dodge the blades of his enemies, and used Nenekirimaru to retaliate, after that he repeated the pattern of dodge, retaliate, dodge, retaliate. Faced with people who teamed up to attack in a group, he would take a cup of Sake and use Meikyō Shisui---Sakura, using a large burst of fire to blast the enemies away. There were no enemies in front of the Supreme Commander, there was no one who could surpass this power.

---Dad is so strong.....

Rihan couldn't help thinking.

The laid back father who jokes around with his Youkai comrades and gets scolded frequently by his mother could not be overlapped with the father he sees before him. Unmatched, astounding aura, the personification of power, the Supreme Commander kept advancing deeper into the house.

---This is the Lord of the Hyakki Yako.....

Rihan stared at his father's strong and *gallant* back, thinking to himself. The Hyakki must be attracted to and admired this back.

Without knowing exactly when, the feelings of awe he felt because of his first participation in a fight had disappeared from Rihan's heart.

---One day, I will also.....

A strong feeling welled up in Rihan's heart.

The Supreme Commander reached the innermost section of the house in no time at all, Rihan also entered that room under Karasu Tengu's protection.

There were two adults and one child in that room. The child was Sawamura Sentarou, among the two adults, the one wearing an elaborate Kimono must be the Head Metsuke ● Sawamura Shigeaki, and the remaining person should be the general amongst the retainers.

Sawamura Shigeaki had his back against the wall, sweat running down his pale face, the son Sentarou was as pale as his father. Only the man, as a retainer, had a stiff expression on his face, gripping onto the hilt of a sword, throwing a sharp gaze in their direction.

"Bakufu Head Metsuke ● Sawamura Shigeaki! You scoundrel, who brings harm to innocent people and step on the peaceful lives of common folk! I, Nurarihyon-sama, am going to punish you right now! Prepare yourself!"

The Supreme Commander raised Nenekirimaru once more after saying this, but.....

"Kuro, Kurogawa!"

Sawamura screamed.

The retainer known as Kurogawa pulled out his sword swiftly and stepped forward.

"Hmph, Kurogawa is a swordsman who has learnt the Juumonji-ryu, you won't leave this place alive!"

Sawamura grabbed onto the pillar in front of the wall, and said this, his face covered in sweat.

Rihan did not know what kind of style was the Juumonji-ryu, but the aura coming off Kurogawa was astounding.

"Dad..."

Rihan said this nervously.

However, the Supreme Commander was very calm. He gave a smile and looking at Kurogawa, he said,

“Rihan, your Meikyō Shisui is really good, but...Nurarihyon still has this type of ability, watch carefully.”

The next moment, Kurogawa attacked with a roar. With his sword, he cut into the left shoulder, and the Supreme Commander was diagonally cut into half.

At this instant, Sawamura let out a cheer of “Wah ha!”, Rihan shouted “Dad!”

In the next second, the Supreme Commander’s body, having been cut open, dissolved into the air.

“The one which was cut is a mirror image, just like the moon reflected in the water---Rihan, remember this well, this is Kyōka Suigetsu.”

“---!”

After the voice, the actual body of the Supreme Commander materialised about the distance of one pillar away from the original position.

Just as Kurogawa was about to turn around, Nenekirimaru swung downwards.

No blood sprayed in front of them, because Nenekirimaru is a sword that cuts Youkai. Kurogawa only collapsed and fainted from the impact of the sword cutting him.

The Supreme Commander quietly adjusted his breathing, released his defensive stance, and turned his head towards his son.

“Yeah, something like that. If you can use this ability, it’ll be very convenient.”

After he said this, Rihan closed one his eyes like he usually did,

“Dad...don’t frighten me like that.”

Rihan let out a breath, then gave a smile.

“Now then...” Nurarihyon turned towards the Sawamura father and son while sliding Nenekirimaru back into its sheath.

“The swordsman you relied on has ended up like this, will you draw your swords too? If you have the resolve to go against me, I am willing to be your opponent.”

The Head Metsuke and his son squeezed back into the wall, shivering.

“We, we won’t dare...”

Shigeaki said.

“I, I’m sorry...”

Sentarou said.

“Is that so? If that is the case, then listen carefully to what I am going to say now, understand? Release Hayashida Daijiro from the Yamen immediately, then do not go near the Hayashida family again, if you make any funny moves...”

The Supreme Commander paused.

The Sawamura father and son swallowed their saliva.

“The Nura Clan Hyakki will punish you using much stronger Fear than the one we’ve shown tonight! Understand!”

“Ye...yes!”

The Sawamura father and son replied loudly. At this scene, the Nurarihyon father and son looked at each other and laughed.

The suppression this time is nearing its end.

Afterwards, Sawamura Shiegaki sent people to the Yamen and released the imprisoned Hayashida Daijiro using the authority of the Head Metsuke. The Yamen did not understand why the Head Metsuke would give orders related to the street fire which the Bakufu officials would not care about, but this confusion had nothing to do with the Nura Clan.

Following this, two days after the suppression movement, the Sawamura family were placed under home exile to reflect on their mistakes. Someone revealed the assassination plans to the Rōjyū who was targeted, naturally, this report was arranged by the Nura Clan. Even though the Sawamura family were currently punished with home exile for reflection, but a harsher punishment would definitely be dealt onto them in the future.

Chapter 11

Five days after his father, Hayashida Daijiro, was released from the Yamen, Sounosuke and his family packed their luggage, preparing to return to their home in Ōshū. Since his innocence was proven, and a new job has been arranged, this will be a journey towards happiness.

Rihan headed to the entrance of the street by himself, prepared to send off the Hayashida family, prepared for their trip.

Hayashida Daijiro and his wife were thankful for the Nura Clan’s help from the bottom of their heart, they gripped Rihan’s hands, thanking him profusely.

When it was finally time to part, Rihan said to Sounosuke,

“Sounosuke, take care.”

“Yeah, Rihan as well.”

“You must learn from your father, and be an outstanding Samurai.”

“Yeah, Rihan should also become an outstanding Second.”

“Of course.”

“Rihan...”

Sounosuke lowered his head slightly while talking, his lips shaking.

“Goodbye.”

“Yeah, goodbye.”

Rihan nodded as well.

Sounosuke and his family started to walk away, and until they disappeared at the other end of the road, Rihan stayed where he was.

As the Supreme Commander was maintaining Nenekirimaru in the outer corridors, he heard Karasu Tengu's voice coming from faraway.

"Young Master Rihan, you used that move again!"

This was something the Supreme Commander heard many times before.

"Those two people don't listen to advice at all..."

The Supreme Commander raised the sword to the sunlight, and at this time, Rihan ran into the yard. It looks like he plans to cross the yard to escape out of the house.

"You snuck away again?"

The Supreme Commander asked.

"Because the class was boring."

Rihan replied.

At this time, Karasu Tengu flew over with surprising speed.

"Young Master Rihan, I will definitely not allow you to get away today!"

"Wah!"

Rihan gave a shout and ran forward once more. But today, Karasu Tengu's aura was very different from normal.

"I have no choice, Young Master Rihan, pardon me!"

After Karasu Tengu said this, he threw the Buddhist staff in his hands towards Rihan's feet.

With a whoosh, the Buddhist staff flew beautifully and landed at the spot between Rihan's two feet, embedding itself into the yard. It looked as if Rihan was about to topple forward, but in the next second, his body actually dissolved into the air.

"What!"

Karasu Tengu yelled.

---Oh.

The Supreme Commander's eyes widened.

Rihan smiled mischievously further away from where the illusion dissolved.

"How's this?"

He seemed to be directing this towards his father.

"You're really good. When did you learn it?"

The Supreme Commander asked with a laugh. Rihan laughed with a "Heh heh." as he rubbed the area under his nose.

"I tried to copy it, and I ended up succeeding by accident."

"Succeeding by accident? You really mature too quickly."

"Ah, you're really a Second with an unlimited future."

Karasu Tengu said emotionally, but he quickly came back to his senses, saying,

“But I would still ask you to study!”

“I already said that I don’t want to ~~”

Rihan stuck out his tongue and ran away, Karasu Tengu gave chase, shouting “Young Master Rihan, please wait!”

As he heard the sounds getting further away, the Supreme Commander turned his gaze towards Nenekirimaru.

---That guy finally learned Kyōka Suigetsu, huh...

He thought, with this, the day he passes this sword to that guy would come soon.

However, he did not feel lonely. Any parent would feel happy seeing their child’s growth.

---It’s nothing. After letting go of the sword, I’ll just hold a fishing rod.

Days fishing together with Hihi aren’t so bad. The Supreme Commander smiled as he thought of this.

Ayakashi-sama, the tea is ready---at this time, Youhime’s voice could be heard.

END